

## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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## GLOBAL EDUCATION SUMMIT SPOTLIGHTS GIRLS' EDUCATION AND FAMILY PLANNING IN THE SAHEL

**[BERKELEY, California -- July 21, 2021]** At next week's Global Education Summit, held online and in London, a half-day official side event will explore the surprising impacts of girls' education and family planning in the West African Sahel, and the funding needed to expand access to them.

Population growth in the Sahel region is among the highest in the world. By conservative estimates the Sahel countries' population will more than double – from 85 million to nearly 200 million people – by 2050. Nigeria is estimated to exceed 400 million by midcentury and become the third most populous country after China and India. This unique pace of growth in population will occur as global warming turns an already hot region into an unbearably hot region. Unless we build on and expand recent successes in girls' education and family planning, the collision of demography and climate change will trigger an unprecedented number of involuntary refugees.

The Global Education Summit is organized by OASIS, an NGO working to advance education and choice for women and girls in the Sahel, in partnership with the Centre for Girls Education, L'Initiative OASIS Niger, the Ouagadougou Partnership Coordination Unit and the Bixby Center for Population, Health and Sustainability at University of California, Berkeley. It takes place (virtually) on Tuesday, July 27th from 8am-12pm Eastern Standard Time. Journalists and bloggers are invited to attend via Zoom. The agenda is posted [here](#), and registration is available [here](#).

Speakers include Dr. Nicolas Meda, special advisor to the President of Burkina Faso, Marie Ba, Director of the Ouagadougou Partnership, Pape Amadou Gaye, founder of the Baobab Institute for Health and Development in Senegal, and Dr. Ndola Prata, Director of the Bixby Center for Population, Health and Sustainability at UC Berkeley. Live translation to French and English will be provided.

Research [finds](#) that targeted investments in family planning and girls' education in the Sahel in this decade could slow population growth, mitigate the region's looming hunger, poverty and other humanitarian needs, advance Sustainable Development Goals, and help reverse already severe and worsening migration, terrorism and unrest.

“Investing in family planning has an astonishingly high return,” said Malcolm Potts, founding director emeritus of OASIS and the Bixby Center. “It generates \$120 in social, economic, and environmental benefits for every \$1 spent, making it the single most impactful social investment. We could achieve universal contraceptive access across the Sahel for about \$100 million, and give all girls access to education and greater determination for themselves and their families for about \$1.2 billion. That would yield over \$150 billion in benefits and economic growth, and priceless advances against terrorism, the migration crisis, hunger, poverty, health threats, and more. It’s one of the best, most cost-effective things the international aid community can do, and key to achieving the SDGs. Yet we’re not doing it on a regional scale.”

“In rural northern Nigeria, the majority religion is Islam and the population is mostly Hausa,” said Habiba Mohamed, Director of the Centre for Girls Education in Zaria, Nigeria. “It is difficult for a girl to go to school, especially in the rural areas. Because of the low quality of education, you find out that after six years of schooling, a girl cannot even write her name. People tend to marry their girls off when they are young. By 15 a girl will have a baby. We all know the body of a very young child is not ready to have a baby. Some of them lose the baby or die in childbirth. If girls are not educated these tragedies will continue. But staying in school can stop the cycle. Girls participating in our Safe Spaces program marry on average two and a half years later than those who don't. ”

*NOTE TO EDITORS AND PRODUCERS: Sources quoted in this release, presenters at the July 27 event, and other experts are available for side interviews and comment on request. To arrange an interview, or for more information on the “Increasing Aid for Girls’ Education and Family Planning in the West African Sahel” virtual event, contact Alisha Graves, [agraves@oasissahel.org](mailto:agraves@oasissahel.org), +1 415 623 6906*